1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

IX

MARRIAGE

583 THE customs relating to marriage will be better understood if it be made clear at the outset that there are four distinct methods by which an Orokaiva can obtain a wife. They are (1) Purchase, (2) Exchange, (3) Elopement, and (4) Capture. The first three of these methods are in continual use to-day; the fourth has fallen out of fashion, but only since the pacification of the country by the white man. Cases of marriage by capture have been very common, and the custom is not so long obsolete but that many women are still to be found in the Division who first met their husbands as members of a hostile raiding party. I shall return to a discussion of these several methods at the end of the chapter.

Polygamy and Exogamy

595 In the great majority of instances marriage is monogamous. Whether in the fighting days there existed that surplus of males over females which the modern census reveals, it is impossible to say; but apart from this we are told that every mature and normal man had a wife, so that one finds it difficult to conceive how polygamy could have been very prevalent. In present-day instances the polygamous husband rarely has more than two wives. A certain young man Orari of Isivita, who is of more than usually prepossessing appearance, has divorced one and at present owns three. Asked why he had so many he said it was the girls' fault; they all wanted him. It seems probable, however, that wealth and power rather than personal attraction are the means of winning extra wives. The record instance, as far as my knowledge goes, is that of a man Buninia whose wives are numbered by his surviving contemporaries at eleven. Buninia was a man of great influence among all the Aiga clans, and was notorious for bad temper and bullying. It is said that he was greatly feared. It will go without

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

Illegitimate children are rare 584 [845]

rare. It is said to be the custom to do away with them, though this is certainly not invariable.

Except of course in the case of *kerari* there is no necessity for a 'long engagement'. In one instance a girl had asked her sweetheart to take her away and marry her quickly, as she feared that if the matter were delayed some other boy might come along and disjoin her affections from him.

An Orokaiva youth is not put to the necessity of waiting till his income is adequate to matrimony. There are no expenses of upkeep in an Orokaiva household, and it is solely a question of furnishing a bride-price, for which he will be able to draw upon his father and his sympathetic clansmen.

Marriage Ceremonies. The actual ceremonies of marriage— 585 583
such as they are—depend in some degree upon the nature of the transaction. In most cases of capture and elopement there are naturally enough no rites celebrating the first cohabitation of husband and wife: the former simply appropriates the latter or entices her to his home. In the instances—frequent as they are—where the bride's people withhold their consent or are taken by surprise, they will come in force next morning to the village to abuse husband and wife, and they may even endeavour to drag the latter away. On one occasion I saw a runaway bride very roughly handled by the women of her own village and finally led away, stripped and weeping, to her home. But in the usual instance it appears that this visit from the outraged people of the bride is nothing more than a form. They make a pretence of dragging away the woman, but they really acquiesce with a bad grace in her remaining. Thus an elderly woman of Korisata tells how she clung to a corner of her husband's house when her own people came to remove her by force. Her people returned without her and, as in all such cases, received payment in due course.

Where the bride's people do not actually lay hands on 585 578
her, they may content themselves with vituperating her husband. Sometimes he is subjected to indignities of a more tangible nature. Endeavouring on one occasion to elicit something about marriage ceremonies, I began by telling my informants of the pretty customs of throwing rice and

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

bride sits here daily, and dishes of food are presented to her by members of the husband's village. Of course she cannot eat such a quantity of food herself but distributes it in turn among the donors.

She does no work, nor is she bound to sit in state the whole time. She occasionally mounts the platform during the day, and by night sleeps indoors with her husband. At the end of the *asanga* she is loaded with ornaments and taken to see her husband's garden, and from then on lives the toilsome life of ordinary wifehood.

Except for these two forms, the *asanga* or welcome on the one hand, and the dragging away of the bride and the humiliation of the husband on the other, there are, as far as I know, no actual ceremonies of marriage. There is nothing in the nature of a sacrament, and nothing to celebrate the first married union of the couple.

Marriage Payments. The actual marriage payment takes place after the husband and wife have been living together for some time. The price is called *dorobu*, which, as natives have explained, is a compound of *dora* (wealth in the shape of ornaments) and *obu* (pots). It varies considerably in quantity, but always comprises ornaments (*bambo*), feather-sets (*dī*), a quantity of garden food, and one or more pigs. In one typical instance the bride-price consisted of 10 ornaments (including *peremo*, *bono*, *huave*, *saima*), of 38 sets of feathers (14 of cassowary feathers, 16 of hornbill, 5 of parrot, 1 of the Bird of Paradise, 1 of the hawk *Guvera*, and 1 of a red and black bird *Ungaiavo*), of a great tower of taro, bananas, and coco-nuts, and of a pig. The feather-sets are affixed to a spear driven into the ground. The taro is usually tied in bundles about a betel palm, or two palms growing close together between which cross-pieces are tied in the manner of a ladder. In many cases the whole payment is not made on one occasion. A man of Wasida, for instance, has given six pigs for his wife in instalments of 2, 1, 1, and 2.

The payment for the bride is never an entirely private transaction between the husband's family and the wife's. The whole clan as well as the maternal relations will com-

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

583 monly contribute; and on the other hand the *dorobu* will be distributed among the bride's clan. At the taking over, which will be described presently, a number of more or less closely related villages will come to support both parties, donors, and recipients, and the price itself will be very liberally shared among the latter. I have seen a father of the bride on such an occasion give away to his friends all the costly ornaments which the *dorobu* comprised except for one set of hornbill beaks which he set on his own head.

In a large percentage of instances a return present of equivalent value is made by the bride's people to the bridegroom's. The bride-price is called specifically *a-dorobu*, and the 'bridegroom-price' *bi-dorobu*. *A* means vulva and *bi* penis. It would seem that where a *bi-dorobu* is given the bride herself virtually goes for nothing, because informants generally insist that the two prices are of equal value. Several explanations have been offered. It has been said that the bride's people do not like to be outdone in liberality and regard it as a creditable thing to return pound for pound; indeed they would be ashamed to make no return payment. It has also been said that the *bi-dorobu* will make the husband a better friend of his wife's people: he will be more likely to help them in their work and make them presents of food. But the usual explanation is somewhat different: if no return payment were made, the husband would be apt to ill-treat his wife, or he would feel at least that he could ill-treat her with impunity. If, however, the *bi-dorobu* had been paid, an ill-used wife might return to her parents and the husband would have no claim. In a certain case where no *bi-dorobu* was given or expected, the father of the bridegroom said that if his son beat his wife there would be no protest from the latter's family: they would say, 'Well, we have our price for her, and her husband may do as he pleases.' In one district I was told that the custom of giving a *bi-dorobu* was dying out, for nowadays the people placed reliance on the Government and thought it less necessary to insure against ill-treatment of their kinswoman in this way, viz. by making a payment to her husband.

By virtue of the *bi-dorobu*, therefore, it would seem the

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

wife's people retain an interest in her welfare. While we may not entirely disregard this explanation there is another and a simpler one. In many cases there is a *bi-dorobu*; in many cases there is not. It is difficult to understand why, if any of the above explanations be the real one, there should not be a *bi-dorobu* in every case. The fundamental explanation is, I prefer to believe, that the *bi-dorobu* accompanies an *exchange* (*mine*) of brides between two groups. This does not mean, of course, that the exchange is simultaneous: the second marriage which is to square the first may be deferred, but the exchange is nevertheless contemplated. In such a case the returning of *bi-dorobu* for *a-dorobu* is at least a logical transaction; whereas if there were no girl in the husband's group who could eventually be given to a boy in the wife's group, then the giving of a *bi-dorobu* equivalent to the *a-dorobu* would be a poor business proposition, for the woman would go for nothing.

Instances in which the *bi-dorobu* is refused have been explained in precisely this manner. For example, an old man of the clan Asiahije has a son and daughter. The daughter elopes with a man of the clan Koropahije, who eventually pays *a-dorobu*, because, as he explains it, there is no suitable girl in the Koropahije clan for his son to marry. So in effect he sells his daughter and keeps the price. He made it clear too that she was worth the price as she no doubt had many children inside her—an argument which was offered more than once in similar circumstances.

From an economic standpoint, therefore, the *bi-dorobu* is not compatible with actual marriage by purchase, but only with present or future exchange. This does not mean that exchange is always accompanied by *bi-dorobu*. Sometimes the exchange is made without payment on either side, i.e. without either *a-dorobu* or *bi-dorobu*. Sometimes, again, a woman may be married by purchase proper, i.e. without *bi-dorobu*, and eventually a man of her clan may marry a girl of her husband's clan. In this second marriage, which virtually completes an exchange, the circumstances of the first marriage are not forgotten and the *bi-dorobu* is withheld. Apparently characteristic of most Papuan, if not of most primi-

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

583 tive, peoples is their love of making gifts; but not less characteristic is their habit of expecting a return. Even the friendliest and most hospitable of transactions are in the nature of a 'square deal', and marriage, whenever it is carried out regularly, is no exception to this rule.

583 581 Regular marriage is not only a contract between individual man and wife, but, economically, is a transaction between two clans. The woman passes into the ownership of her husband's clan. The communal nature of the transaction is evidenced by the fact that the clans as a whole give and receive the bride-price, and further by the fact that, as we shall see, they appear in united force at the ceremony of 583 payment. The position of the widow is in keeping with the 587 same idea. Having entered her former husband's clan she belongs to it after his death and may automatically become the wife of one of his 'brothers'. I have an instance of a son marrying one of his father's widows, and a fairly old one at that. The woman, however, is not in any sense bound, and in the majority of cases that I have noted her second marriage is with an outsider. In such event the payment for the widow (which is much smaller than that for a maid) goes normally to the former husband's people; though very commonly some additional payment is made to the woman's own people, who are thus paid twice for the one woman. I cannot say whether this additional payment is complimentary, or whether it may have some relation to a *bi-dorobu* paid in the first place.

Transfer of the Bride-price

585 The actual taking over of the bride-price, which occurs some time after the union of husband and wife, is, from the clan point of view, the legalizing of that union. There may be some considerable delay. In one case the bride's people were constantly blowing the *hui* to advertise the fact that they were still awaiting payment and to expedite a settlement by putting the bridegroom's village to shame.

[583] When the *dorobu*—which includes a great quantity of food—has been got together, the supporting clans of the husband's people are invited to the village. Here they will

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

583
301
291

(*a*) A Bride with part of the Bride-price

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342

(*b*) Preparations for handing over the Bride-price

PLATE XXII [facing p. 140]

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

in the open space of the village with shrill cries and shouts. The old man who has gone back to sit with his people, viz. those of the bridegroom, now springs to his feet and rushes upon Tembari with rage and indignation fairly flashing out of his eyes. The two performers in this very characteristic scene swerve and avoid one another with amazing skill. The old man is shouting that his wife did not cook for him nor look after his comfort and therefore deserved to be beaten. After one or two almost hair-raising dodges the two retire from the arena in the best of good humour, the old wife-beater's face covered with smiles.

The proceedings come to an end towards evening, when after a feast the several parties disperse. Neither bride nor bridegroom has borne a part of any importance. The former has for the most part been a spectator from a house verandah.

The martial demonstrations which have been described in the foregoing pages, especially the charge and counter-charge known as *esu*, are very commonly associated with the marriage payment, but they are by no means restricted to this occasion. Nor, on the other hand, is the marriage payment always accompanied by an *esu*. It is said that where villages are entirely friendly there will be no such seemingly hostile demonstration, and that the bridegroom's people may even take payment to the village of the bride. I do not know that the *esu* is ever performed at the acceptance of a *bi-dorobu*. The occasion above described is of course that of accepting an *a-dorobu*, or bride-price.

The Four Forms of Marriage

It remains to consider and compare the four forms of marriage, or the four methods of obtaining a mate, which were named in the beginning of the chapter. It will be understood that the following remarks refer to marriage as it obtains among the Orokaiva, and are not meant necessarily to apply to the usages of other primitive peoples.

Marriage by capture has been of very frequent occurrence. It was the practice in cannibal raids to kill and eat the men and the older women, but to make captives of any women who were sufficiently young and attractive. It is not to be

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

supposed that women and girls were always spared, for they sometimes met death in the heat of the moment. A very old man named Barepa enumerates ten victims of whom three were women. On the occasion of his first raid he was a mere boy, but in the scatter and pursuit he had captured a girl somewhat older than himself. When his people were mustering again he stood on the track holding her by the wrist. Up to that time he had been cherishing a youthful intention of keeping her till he should be of an age to marry, and when some of his elders laughingly said that she was too big for him and would escape he replied, 'Not she!' Next moment she had wrenched herself free and made off into the bush. Barepa gave chase, caught her, and dragging her back to the track deliberately killed her with a blow from a stone club, thereby showing his clansmen 'that he was not such a boy after all'. On another occasion he was holding a woman captive when she unexpectedly kicked him in the stomach and knocked him on to his back. Under this treatment Barepa's intentions suddenly changed and he sprang to his feet and clubbed the woman to death.

But instances in which the woman has been taken back to the raider's village and has settled down there as a wife are very common. For instance an Aiga man tells how his father and a friend had observed a Jeva Buje man in a canoe with his wife and daughter on the Kumusi. While the man remained in the canoe the two women had gone ashore to gather pandanus leaves. The two Aiga men stole upon them, clubbed the older woman and made off with the younger, while the father, hearing an uproar which he no doubt construed as a large attack, paddled for his life downstream in the direction of his village. The captive woman, who I believe still survives, became the mother of my informant.

An old woman of Sangara married originally a man of Wasida. She was subsequently captured by some of the Sauaha tribe and became the wife of a Sauaha man. In the course of a raid by Sangara upon Sauaha she was captured once more. In the confusion of flight she had leapt on a fallen log and screamed the name of her paternal uncle,

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

583 727 who was of course a Sangara man. One of the attackers, hearing the familiar name of his fellow tribesman, bore her back to her original village and married her. This old woman, captured, recaptured, and thrice married, was found living in contented old age with her third husband. But she said she had been well enough satisfied with each in turn and refused to express any retrospective preference.

Instances could be multiplied without making the matter clearer. A captive wife is called *jigari*, which simply means 'captive'. When, as in the usual instance, she is of another tribe, she is called *baira*, a 'stranger', though this word does not necessarily connote captivity as well.

Sometimes the captive wife was allowed to bring an infant with her, and it appears that both mother and child were well treated and settled down in their new surroundings. Buninia (who was mentioned as the husband of eleven wives) captured a woman and her young daughter. He kept the latter until she grew up and then found her attractive enough to marry also.

[578] Marriage by capture evidently did not always result in good feeling between the wife's people and the husband's. An elderly man who married his paternal uncle's widow (a captive) has never to this day visited her village, and avers that he is still afraid to do so. In another case an elderly woman never saw her people after being captured until the spread of Government control recently made it possible. Though, on the other hand, I have an instance in which the husband of a captive woman agreed to her warning her people of an impending attack; and in the [728] making of peace between tribes such women were the recognized emissaries. This points to the possibility of compensation for the capture which would follow on or be a condition to reconciliation between the tribes; though I am unable to give an instance of such tribal compensation.

583 628 In nearly all the cases of which I know, the captive woman has come from another tribe, rather than from another clan within the tribe. That is to say she has been taken as a true prisoner of war. But I have a few instances in which a woman has been captured or abducted from one clan by

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

another within the tribe; and in such cases it appears that the clan, in the absence of due compensation, would attempt a reprisal. A Bologosusu man killed the dog of a Sapute man. The latter enlisted the support of his friends, and together they raided the Bologosusu gardens, carried off a girl whom they found at work, and married her to one of their number. Now the Bologosusu people—with what exact intention is not clear—got together their supporters and attacked the Sapute faction, but were defeated with the loss of four killed against their opponent's two. Unfortunately I have no information as to how the matter ended, but it is hard to believe that the Bologosusu party, which is a strong one, should have allowed the matter to rest without some compensation from their near neighbours of Sapute. In another case the people of Koninida surrounded a girl of Suporasusu who was working in a garden with her brother. They decoyed the latter away and seized the girl. According to the Koninida informants the Suporasusu people were too weak to attempt a reprisal.

To sum up on the question of marriage by capture it is fair to suppose, in consideration of many examples, that capture has been since the beginning a common method of obtaining a wife among the Orokaiva. It is of course regarded as highly unsatisfactory by the wife's people unless they receive some compensation. In the event of ordinary capture in a cannibal raid on another tribe, the only likely form of compensation would be the capture of another woman in a retaliatory raid; though it is also conceivable that compensation of some sort, e.g. payment, should be made at the truces or peace-makings (*peka*) which occasionally took place between enemy tribes; of this, however, I can cite no examples.

In the event of a capture or abduction within the tribe it is, I believe, necessary to assume that some kind of adjustment, i.e. compensation by exchange or payment, would be made before the clans and villages concerned could settle down to live in their normal amity. Failing some such compensation the transaction remains economically unsatisfactory to one of the parties, and would inevitably lead to reprisal.

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

583 The same disadvantage, that of a one-sided bargain, belongs to marriage by elopement. Of this again there are many examples. It appears that a nubile girl is regarded as a valuable asset to her people and in the ideal circumstances she marries into a clan which can return another nubile girl by way of exchange. But not infrequently a girl forms a love match in an undesirable quarter, and will go to her lover's village without the consent or knowledge of her parents. It is quite common for the girl to take the initiative (for proposals may come from either side) by asking her lover to take her. Then will follow the quarrelsome scene in which the bride's people demand restitution, and in which they may succeed in reclaiming the girl. But, as we have seen, the matter is usually compromised; due compensation is made and the girl remains with her husband.

There are two ways in which the due compensation may be made, viz. either by exchange (*mine*), or by paying a bride-price (*dorobu*). I am inclined to think that marriage by exchange is the Orokaiva ideal, and the great objection to elopement is that it may frustrate the intention of exchange. I give two instances to illustrate this feeling.

583 518 A young man of Korisata eloped with a girl of Koninida. The latter's people were infuriated and at first refused to consider the proposition of payment. They abused the young husband, cried out his name to his face, called him *pureambo*, a 'loafer', and *sovai-ta-mei*, the son of a supernatural monster. Eventually, however, they came out and accepted payment. But the leader of the Koninida people went so far as to lay hands on the young daughter of the leader of the Korisata party. The latter, however, said he had no intention of letting her go as he had a son of his own whom he wished to marry off, and he meant to keep this girl so as to make a suitable exchange.

In another case a young man, backed up by his father, complained bitterly of the conduct of his sister who had run away with a lover. He wished eventually to marry himself, and had set his heart on a certain girl. He had proposed therefore to effect an exchange by giving his sister to this girl's brother. His plea is now that his own

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

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chance of marriage is seriously damaged by his sister's elopement.

From such instances as these it appears that marriage by exchange is preferable to marriage by purchase—at least in the eyes of the marriageable man, and probably also in the eyes of their elders who sympathize with their desires. We may perhaps go so far as to say that the actual buying of a wife only takes place when circumstances make present or future exchange impossible. 583

Exchange may take place without payment of any kind from either side; or it may be accompanied by equal payments from either side, viz. *a-dorobu* and *bi-dorobu*, which do not affect the balance. Further, there seems to be a likelihood that the *bi-dorobu* or 'bridegroom-price' is always associated at least with the expectation of an exchange; or in other words we can speak of definite purchase only when the *a-dorobu* is given and the *bi-dorobu* withheld.

We thus find that of the four kinds of marriage, Capture, Elopement, Exchange, and Purchase, the first two, while taking place very commonly, are economically unsatisfactory. With regard to capture we may assume, and with regard to elopement we may actually see, a tendency to make the affair regular by giving or extracting compensation in the form of exchange or payment, and thus striking the economic balance which is so dear to the native's heart. Capture would still be common if it were not for the *pax britannica*; elopement is still common as it is. These are both in keeping with the nature of the Orokaiva (and one presumes of any other equally warlike and primitive savage). But except in the case of two enemy tribes between whom negotiation is impossible, they tend to resolve themselves subsequently into exchange or purchase. The remarkable gestures of hostility against the husband's people which sometimes characterize Orokaiva marriage, i.e. the attempted dragging away of the bride by her people, the humiliation of the bridegroom, the damaging of his village, and the bellicose demonstrations at the taking over of the *dorobu*, all properly belong to the irregular methods of capture and elopement; they are the aftermath, the retaliation. In so far

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

583 as they constitute ceremonies of regular marriage they may be survivals, symbolizing not capture itself, but the adjustment of an irregular match, as if payment were not so much given as exacted.

This is not to say that exchange or purchase necessarily and always develop from capture and elopement; or in other words that capture or elopement are the original forms of Orokaiva marriage. Friendly exchanges and convenient purchases were no doubt made at any time and quite independently. All four methods existed simultaneously, and each operated from time to time. But capture and elopement tended to be regularized as exchange or purchase; and as there is little doubt that exchange, with or without mutual payments, is preferred to a one-sided purchase, it seems therefore that whenever it was possible, exchange was the ideal form of Orokaiva marriage.